



BOARD OF HEALTH

The Thurston County Board of Health has responsibility
and authority for public health in both incorporated
and unincorporated areas of the County.

Minutes for August 11, 2020

1) Call Meeting to Order

Chair Tye Menser called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

In Attendance:

Tye Menser, Chair; Gary Edwards, Commissioner; Ramiro Chavez, County Manager; Robin Campbell, Assistant County Manager; Schelli Slaughter, Public Health and Social Services Department Director; Dr. Dimyana Abdelmalek, Health Officer; and Lydia Hodgkinson, Clerk of the Board of Health.

Excused Absence: John Hutchings, Vice Chair

Approval of the Board of Health Agenda:

Chair Menser moved to approve the meeting agenda. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously. The motion carried.

Approval of meeting minutes:

Chair Menser moved to approve meeting minutes from the July 14, 2020 regular meeting, and special meetings held on April 28, 2020, April 30, 2020, May 22, 2020, and June 17, 2020. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously. The motion carried.

2) Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board - none

3) Consent Items

Chair Menser moved to accept Consent Item “a”. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously. The motion carried.

a) **Description:** Acceptance of Work session notes

Contact: Lydia Hodgkinson, Administrative Assistant II

Action: Move to accept work session notes from Board of Health agenda settings held on July 7, 2020 and July 14, 2020; and Board of Health briefings held on June 17, 2020 and July 22, 2020.

DEPARTMENT ITEMS

4) COVID-19 Update

Schelli Slaughter explained she and Dr. Dimyana Abdelmalek, Health Officer, would expand on the weekly update given to the Board of County Commissioners each Tuesday morning during the agenda settings and will answer any questions. Ms. Slaughter provided the following information:

- Washington State:
 - 63,647 positive cases of COVID-19
 - 6,049 hospitalized
 - 1,697 deaths
- Thurston County as of 2:00 pm
 - 802 positive cases of COVID-19; 103 positive cases in the last 7 days, which is concerning rise in cases
 - 11 deaths; 1 new death this last week
 - 58 cases have ever been hospitalized; 2 in the last 7 days
 - 657 of the 802 positive cases are recovering; this does not mean they may or may not have short- or long-term effects from COVID-19 but they are released from public health isolation and quarantine.
- Providence St. Peters and Capital Medical Center report 14 positive patients. As both hospitals are Regional Health Care Hospitals this number includes residents from other counties.
- Ongoing congregate outbreaks – currently 3; 5 total to date
- Testing for COVID-19 in Thurston County – 4.7 % of tests have tested positive
- Demographically there has been a great shift in the last few months – previously the older demographic has contracted COVID-19; currently 14% of positive cases are under the age of 19; with the greatest numbers in the 20-29-year old group.
- Positive cases by gender in Thurston County:
 - 52% female
 - 48% male
- Positive cases by race and ethnicity – concerning disparities:
 - 23% Hispanic have contracted COVID-19; only 9% of people in our community identify with ethnicity – outreach has been increased
 - 8% Black/African American have contracted COVID-19; only 3% of people in our community identify with this race – more information will be shared on this disparity during the “Race and Health Equity” topic next on the agenda.
- Hospital capacity status – both hospitals are reporting they have adequate surge capacity
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – availability has stabilized
- Testing results - time frame has improved; turnaround times have decreased to 48 hours

Dr. Abdelmalek provided additional information:

- Younger demographic increase in COVID-19 positive cases in our community:
 - 37 new cases in children under 12 years of age – 69% increase since July 11th
 - 38 new cases in youth 12 to 19 years of age – 68% increase since July 11th
 - For the 20 to 29 years of age group they account for 21% of positive cases since COVID-19 began for a total number of 168 cases

Due to the increase of transmission, especially for children and school age children, she stands by the recommendation to not have in person learning and recommends distance learning at this time in the county. The recommendation does include an allowance for cohort groups of up to 5 students for special learning opportunities.

- Over the past week there has been an increase in outbreaks. Some of the increase is due to a change in the definition of an outbreak in long-term care facilities which went from 2 confirmed cases in a 2-week period to 1 positive case in a 2-week period for either a resident or health care provider - as noted in her community letter (August 7, 2020).
- Case and contact investigations - when we receive positive test results, we conduct an investigation. Through this process, we ask where people were during the period of time when they could have been infectious. We use this information to determine who else might be a close contact. A close contact is a person who has been within six feet of an individual for fifteen or more minutes.
 - Dr. Abdelmalek expressed her gratitude to the public for their support in keeping track of where they have been and who they have been in contact with.
 - She assured the public all information shared during an investigation is kept confidential and not shared with anyone.
- Dr. Abdelmalek addressed Commissioner Edwards' question regarding what the per capita percentage for our County is in regards to the 11 deaths we have had since COVID-19 began 6 months ago.
 - She shared what is important to her, as the Health Officer, is the Case Fatality Rate which is the number of people who contract the virus and die which for our county is 1.5 %. For comparison, this rate is much higher than the flu virus which is .1%. COVID-19 is definitely a significantly bigger threat than the flu. She noted the reason the percentage is not higher for COVID-19 is due to the cooperation of our community to wear masks in public places, social distance and avoiding social gatherings.
- At Commissioner Edwards request, she provided clarification on recommendations of wearing masks in the County which follow the Governor's recommendations:
 - If in an indoor public place, wear a mask
 - If outdoors and you cannot maintain greater than 6 feet of distance from another person outside your house hold, wear a mask.Chair Menser commented on the increase in the number of people using trails which makes it important to always wear a mask when walking the trails.
- Chair Menser's questioned if there is anything unique about Thurston County in comparison to the information the public hears from many sources either nationally or within Washington State. Dr. Abdelmalek responded:
 - Thurston County's overall trajectory has been followed by others across the nation.
 - We are in the 2nd wave.
 - Numbers continue to rise.

- Chair Menser noted a couple of weeks ago transmission was mainly from backyard barbeques and questioned if this was still the case. Dr. Abdelmalek responded:
 - Yes, social gatherings and transmission within homes is still happening; and there is a small rise in general public transmission.

5) Race and Health Equity

Ms. Slaughter introduced the topic noting this item is in response to a community members' request last month that the Board of Health (BoH) consider declaring racism a public health emergency. Mary Ann O'Garro, PHSS Senior Epidemiologist, lead the presentation with input from Taylor Egardo, Representative of Thurston Thrives; Gretchen Thaller, PHSS Maternal Child Health Program Manager; and Keylee Marineau, the PHSS Homeless and Affordable Housing Coordinator. Chair Menser acknowledged Meghan Sullivan, TOGETHER! Deputy Director, who reached out to the Board with a written appeal on this topic.

Ms. O'Garro shared she has been contacted numerous times since George Floyd's death to address this issue and expressed her appreciation to the Board for the opportunity to discuss the topic. She then had the panel of presenters introduce themselves. Ms. O'Garro explained the presentation would be on health equity, highlighting on disparities amongst race equity in our community as well as opportunities for how the Board and our community members can work together to take meaningful action to address the gaps that exist due to racial equity in our community. She then provided an explanation of the terms - Race and Ethnicity:

Official Government Categories for Race (6) – definitions

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or More

Official Government Categories for Ethnicity (2) – a way to collect data

- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic

She also discussed the acronym BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of Color. She then explained Racism is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (race). Ms. O'Garro noted the American Public Health Association's (APHA) webpage keeps a running list of states who have declared Racism a public health crisis, which as of today is 20 states. She then discussed Health Equity - commitment to a course of action that reduces, and ultimately eliminates, health disparities so that optimal health for all is possible. Ms. O'Garro explained in 2017 Thurston Thrives, along with partners, completed a Community Health Assessment for which Thurston County ranked 9th. She then shared life expectancy data for Thurston County by race: disparities; cancer mortality; level of hope in 10th graders; and infant mortality rates. Taylor Egardo addressed the Board explaining Thurston Thrives is interested in a partnership to continue this valuable work. Gretchen Thaller addressed the Board explaining the influences of stress caused by environment and culture begin with pregnancy and continue after the child is born causing health challenges. She then discussed the disparity regarding black children having a 500% higher mortality rate from asthma than white children.

Ms. O'Garro shared some public health implications such as physical health; mental health; child and adolescent development; chronic and infectious diseases such as COVID-19; public safety; housing; and environment. She noted there is already movement in Thurston County and the community on all of these aspects with programs such as public safety with the LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) program and housing programs. She explained a resolution, declaration or whatever mechanism the Board chooses would provide accountability, clarity on focus, a range of ways to engage others that are already interested, accelerate activities that are already in place, and provide new opportunities. Ms. O'Garro noted in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic the department has continued to take action on the PHSS 2020-2024 Strategic Plan to address racial equity. Keylee Marineau thanked Ms. O'Garro, Ms. Egardo and Ms. Thaller for their hard work in our community and the information they provided. She expressed the importance of this topic to her personally and her work addressing homelessness in our community. She expressed the disproportionate representation of permanent housing for people of color not only locally but nationally. Local policies need to be explored to determine what needs to be changed and how are they are made to address racial equity. She then discussed the *Government Alliance on Race and Equity* (GARE) a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all which provides access to expertise and relevant local government tools and resources; and expressed the value of Thurston County joining GARE. Ms. Marineau noted the City of Olympia joined GARE in 2015. David Schaffert, President of Thurston County Chamber and Thurston County Foundation, the back bone of Thurston Thrives, addressed the Board stating there will be no greater opportunity to address racial equity than now. He commented on statistics of disparity and spoke in support of a Thurston County and Thurston Thrives partnership addressing racial equity in our community.

Ms. O'Garro, Ms. Thaller and Ms. Marineau addressed the Board Members' questions and provided clarification on Thurston County statistics. Commissioner Edwards shared his experiences with race and health equity while in law enforcement in the 1950's. He noted he would like additional information to continue the discussion at a later date regarding a county declaration of emergency. He also questioned if prejudices in general and the impact on the gay community will be included. Chair Menser expressed his absolute commitment to addressing this issue and also requested additional information to determine the right mechanism to make the most impact. He referenced Pierce County's and King County's documents as examples. Both Board Members agreed Vice Chair Hutchings needs to be in attendance to hear additional information to determine what is the best mechanism for the most impact. Chair Menser also expressed his agreement for the County to move forward in joining GARE. Discussion ensued around what mechanism would provide a specific next step to address racial equity in our County with the most impact. Chair Menser requested Dr. Dimyana Abdelmalek, Health Officer, share her opinion regarding the public health aspect around institutional racism and if she would support the Board of Health declaring an emergency or whatever mechanism they chose. He also commented on a YWCA program and cultural diversity of the Human Rights Council as possible avenues. Dr. Abdelmalek spoke on the impact institutional racism has on public health and the importance of addressing racial equity in our

community and across the nation. She is in support of whatever the Board decides to do. County Manager, Ramiro Chavez, spoke in support of any action that has the greatest impact and noted budget discussion is taking place to propose a new Program Manager to support this work. He also spoke on the successes of the programs created in the recent past to address the Homelessness and the Opioid crises. Ms. O'Garro commented on Ms. Taylor's and Mr. Schaffert's comments about Thurston Thrives' work focused on addressing this issue and feels a conversation with Thurston Thrives would be a great place to start and could be very meaningful for 2020 and 2021. Chair Menser expressed his interest in exploring a conversation. The Board thanked all of the panel members, and Mr. Schaffert, for the presentation and discussion.

6) Board of Health Members' Health Related Activities and Accomplishments - none

7) Health Officer's Report

Dr. Abdelmalek stated she looks forward to partnership collaboration to address community disparities.

8) Director's Report

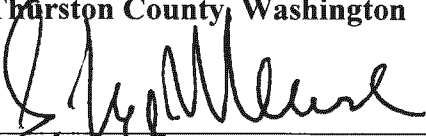
Ms. Slaughter reported on:

- Expressed her appreciation of the discussion to address disparities.
- The Thurston Chamber has nominated PHSS and Dr. Diana Yu, the previous acting Health Officer, for Health Care Champions; Ms. Slaughter extended her thanks to all PHSS staff and Dr. Yu for their hard work on COVID-19; she stated it is an honor to be nominated.
- Update on recent onion recall – onions were from Spokane; they were shipped nationally and to Canada; we have had one case of salmonella in Thurston County; recommended anyone that becomes sick from eating an onion to contact their health care provider.
- Toxic algae on Long Lake and Pattison Lake – Long Lake was closed recently; samples have been taken from six other lakes; expressed her appreciation to members of the public that contact PHSS to report algae; reminded everyone to keep children and pets away from any water effected by toxic algae.
- Bats in our community during the warmer weather – reminded everyone that bats do carry rabies; do not touch bats dead or alive; call PHSS at (360) 867-2667 if any bat issues.
- Summer and sunburns – reminded everyone cloudy days are dangerous also; CDC recommends staying out of the sun.
- Bicycling – shared a reminder that all children need to ride on sidewalks and wear helmets.
- Water recreation – shared a reminder for everyone to wear a life vest when they are on lakes, in rivers and in swimming pools.
- Vaccinations – expressed the importance of continuing with doctor visits and to not delay preventative care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

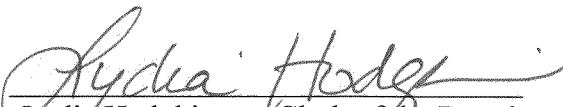
Chair Menser thanked Ms. Slaughter and congratulated her, Dr. Yu and PHSS staff for their Health Care Champion nomination.

9) **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

BOARD OF HEALTH
Thurston County, Washington


TYE MENSER, Chair

ATTEST:


Lydia Hodgkinson, Clerk of the Board


JOHN HUTCHINGS, Vice Chair

Date: September 16, 2020


GARY EDWARDS, Commissioner

Thurston Community Television (TCTV) - The Board of Health meetings are aired on TCTV each week on Sundays at 3:30 p.m., Mondays at 8:00 p.m., Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m., Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m., and Fridays at 6:30 a.m. and at 5:00 p.m.